

Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)



Name of proposal	Early Payment Initiative – Oxygen Finance
Directorate and Service Area	Finance, Revenues
Name of Lead Officer	Kevin Smith

Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

1.1 What is the proposal?

To implement an early payment initiative for suppliers which would deliver earlier payment (inside normal 30 day contract terms) to those suppliers who sign up for the scheme, whilst reducing expenditure, and creating an income stream, for the Council.

Micro businesses who have a primary business base within the geographical boundaries of Bristol Wards will be able to sign up for 'Freepay' thus obtaining the benefits of earlier payment terms without any reduction in invoice value.

Step 2: What information do we have?

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

Procurement will hold details of suppliers who invoice the Council under contract but do not currently maintain any records of businesses that are micro businesses as defined in (1.1) above.

Local research¹ shows that Black and minority ethnic and women-led businesses contribute an estimated average of £2bn to the regional economy. 12.3% of Black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents in the Bristol Quality of Life survey 2019-20 said they were self-employed, compared to 9% Bristol average, and 4.1% said they were in paid work as a freelancer, consultant or contractor (Bristol average 4.8%).

Local research² has highlighted how long-term underinvestment and lack of equity in funding and procurement has eroded the local Voluntary and community sector – in particular for Black and minority ethnic led organisations. 30% of the organisations surveyed stated to operate on an annual budget below £5,000, and an additional 18% operated on below £25,000. 42% of the organisations sampled had no paid staff at all and fully relied on volunteers to deliver their activities and services.

2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?

Currently Procurement requires information on suppliers Equalities Policy as a part of the procurement process. Under the Procurement regulations this is all that is required. What is not available is data on suppliers protected characteristics so it is difficult to determine if any particular groups are more likely to be impacted by the proposal.

Those micro businesses identified from (1.1) are not immediately identifiable by Procurement and Accounts Payable data.

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

Appropriate communications in Plain English with translations / accessible formats available on request will be issued by either / both the Council and / or Oxygen Finance to all currently contracted suppliers advising of the opportunity to participate in the scheme. As each new contract is agreed, suppliers will have the opportunity to on-board and sign up to the scheme.

Micro businesses will be actively targeted and signed up to the 'Freepay' initiative to decrease the time taken for invoices to be paid but also increase their cash flow.

¹ Annual Equality and Diversity Report (April 2017), West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, <http://www.westofenglandlep.co.uk/about-us/strategicplan>

² [Black South West Network: 'We want to change, and they have the power', 2018](#)

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Analysis of impacts on people with protected characteristics must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts in this section, referring to all of the equalities groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?
Some suppliers may not be able to take advantage of the scheme due to their personal circumstances.
3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?
We will ensure that the Oxygen Finance payment portal is accessible e.g. compatible with industry standard assistive technology such as screen readers / text to speech software. Suppliers who are not able to take advantage of the scheme will stay on 'normal' contract terms, with payment of invoices being made within 30 days rather than earlier. Micro businesses will be able to sign up for 'Freepay' which delivers the benefits of this initiative but at no detriment to the invoice value. There is some further mitigation; any supplier who does not sign up for the scheme will receive full payment of their invoice rather than the reduced sum that would be payable.
3.3 Does the proposal create any benefits for people with protected characteristics?
Some suppliers with protected characteristics may sign up for this scheme, providing earlier payment of invoices thereby increasing cash flow.
3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?
Micro businesses will be able to sign up for 'Freepay' which delivers the benefits of this initiative but at no detriment to the invoice value.

Step 4: So what?

The Equality Impact Assessment must be able to influence the proposal and decision. This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings of your Equality Impact Assessment can be measured going forward.

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?
The need to capture equalities data as well as data relating to business type (e.g. micro businesses) moving forward in order that action can be taken to promote the initiative to those sectors that are underrepresented and also so that this data can be reported on a regular basis.
4.2 What actions have been identified going forward?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued, pro-active communications will be undertaken to those suppliers who have not signed up to the scheme by both colleagues in Procurement and also the contractor. 2. Procurement colleagues will explore options and procurement regulations in order to understand if they need to amend their processes to collect equalities data that includes protected characteristics, so that it can be reported on a regular basis if required.
4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a part of the Contract Management piece of work associated with this contract the supplier will be required as a part of their Key Performance Indicators to provide equalities data and report on take up of the early payment initiative by suppliers on a regular basis. This will be monitored by Procurement, Supplier Relations Team and the Contract Manager as a part of their quarterly meetings.

Service Director Sign-Off: Denise Murray	Equalities Officer Sign Off: <i>Reviewed by Equality and Inclusion Team</i>
Date: 21/10/20	Date: 19/10/2020